

MODULE 4

◆◆◆ THE U.S. SCHOOL SYSTEM ◆◆◆

COMPONENTS

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## TEACHER NOTES

This module address the organization of United States schools (from preschool through college), school districts, and opportunities for parental involvement. The pre-reading activity encourages students to share information about the school systems in their native countries. In this way they can move from the familiar (their native countries' school systems) to the less familiar (the United States system). You should be sensitive to the fact that some students may have had limited educational experiences in their native countries.

In this module it is especially important to follow the lead of the class. That is, if there are a lot of parents in the class, then parental involvement issues (for example, parent-teacher conferences) can be explored in detail. Adult learners without children might prefer to investigate other issues, for example, educational opportunities available to them. The experiential activities should be geared to the different interests of students. Dividing the class into two or more groups would allow students to pursue appropriate choices. Each group could give a report on its activity to the rest of the class.

### COMPETENCIES FOR MODULE 4

Students will learn to:

1. Identify how schools are organized in the United States school system (i.e., from preschool through college).
2. Identify the organization of grades and schools within their local school district.
3. Identify the approximate ages of children who attend the schools within their district.
4. Describe the similarities and differences between the United States school system and the school systems of their native countries.
5. Explain the organization of their school district and school board.
6. Identify ways in which parents and other adults can participate in schools.

### A NOTE ON THE READING PASSAGE

The last page of the Reading Passage is a chart titled "Colleges and Universities in the United States". This chart contains information about kinds of U.S. colleges and universities, requirements for admission, and the degrees that can be earned at each. This chart may contain too much detail and vocabulary for beginning-level classes and should be used only if student interest and language level warrant it. Additional degrees (e.g., M.D., J.D., D.D.S., D.V.M.) may be added to the chart.

### THE VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES AND THE READING PASSAGE

The Reading Passage contains a large number of vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar to students. To facilitate the teaching of this module, Vocabulary Activity 1 focuses only on grades and appropriate ages for each grade. Vocabulary Activities 2-A and 2-B correspond to the introduction and first part of the Reading Passage (through "Adult Education"), while Vocabulary Activities 3-A and 3-B correspond to the rest of the Reading Passage ("Special Services" through "Public School Districts"). You may choose to teach the Reading Passage in two parts, at two different class meetings, depending on the level of your class.

**TEACHER NOTES continued****A NOTE ON DIALOGUE 1**

The goal of Dialogue 1 is to teach learners to report a child's absence on the school answering machine. Many schools use an automated phone system or answering machine to take calls from parents or guardians reporting their child's absence. It is important that learners hear the actual recording from their child's school. You can obtain such a recording from the school office or make your own recording using a telephone or pick-up device (with the school's permission). These devices are available for about \$5 at electronics stores.

**A NOTE ON PAIR ACTIVITY 2: THE SCHOOL CALENDAR**

For this activity, obtain a school calendar from a local school attended by the children of many adult students in your class. You could also use the calendar from your ESL adult school. Provide one copy of the school calendar to each pair of students. (This activity can also be done as a whole class or small group activity instead of pairs.)

**EXPANSION IDEAS**

Active involvement in their children's school may not be part of the native culture of ESL parents. They may therefore be very reluctant to take the initiative in contacting teachers or participating in parent-teacher conferences. If the level of the class and student interest warrant it, you may want to role-play scenarios involving typical communication between parents and teachers. Topics might include:

- Homework expectations and study skills
- Seeking extra help from the teacher or school
- Encouraging children to join clubs and sports
- Appropriate classroom behavior

Adult learners with or without children might benefit from activities designed to explore the local community college catalog. Highlights might include:

- GED information
- Special 2-year career programs and licensing
- Non-credit courses
- Special events (job fairs, concerts, cultural events, etc.)
- Admission and registration procedures

**POSSIBLE AUTHENTIC MATERIALS**

- Local newspapers
- School newsletters (weekly "take-home," principal's newsletter, district or superintendent's newsletter)
- School and district web sites
- School literature (brochures on discipline, attendance policies, parent guides, school calendars, handbooks, etc.)
- Community college catalogs

## TEACHER NOTES continued

## RESOURCES\*

Print Materials

*A Guide to Your Children's Schools: A Parent Handbook*, Adult Learning Resource Center, Des Plaines, IL (2002). Can be downloaded from the ISBE English Language learning web site at [www.isbe.net/bilingual](http://www.isbe.net/bilingual). Information for parents on the U.S. school system, enrolling in school, school procedures and parental involvement. Available in English, Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

*Parents as Educational Partners (PEP): A School-Related Curriculum for Language Minority Parents*, Laura Segal Bercovitz and Catherine Porter (1995). Adult Learning Resource Center, Des Plaines, IL, (847) 803-3535, [www.thecenterweb.org](http://www.thecenterweb.org). A reproducible, multilevel curriculum designed to encourage ESL parents to take active roles in their children's education as well as increase their proficiency in English. The curriculum combines instruction about U.S. schools with participatory classroom techniques and includes numerous illustrations.

*Understanding American Schools: The Answers to Newcomers' Most Frequently Asked Questions*, Anne P. Copeland and Georgia Bennett (2001). The Interchange Institute, Brookline, MA, (617) 566-2227, [www.interchangeinstitute.org](http://www.interchangeinstitute.org). A book designed to help non-native parents choose schools and understand the U.S. school system.

New Learning Concepts, Inc., (800) 925-7853, [www.destinationlearn.net](http://www.destinationlearn.net)  
Catalog of parent involvement products including books, videos, and bilingual bookmarks for parents (English and Spanish).

Web Sites

The Center for Law and Education, (202) 462-7688  
[www.cleweb.org/catalog.htm](http://www.cleweb.org/catalog.htm)

The School Improvement Catalog has resources such as *Urgent Message for Parents* and *Parents are Powerful* which contain information on topics such as parent rights, advocating for your child, and improving student achievement in English and Spanish.

## ERIC

[www.eric.ed.org/resources/parent/parent.html](http://www.eric.ed.org/resources/parent/parent.html)

Brochures for parents (many in Spanish) available in print or online on topics relating to the education of children.

## ERIC.EECE Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

[www.ericcece.org/pubs/digests.html](http://www.ericcece.org/pubs/digests.html)

Digests (short articles) on topics relating to schools, pre-schools, language learning and other education issues for teachers and parents. Many available in Spanish.

## National Parent Information Network

[www.npin.org](http://www.npin.org) (Part of the ERIC system)

Resources include a "Virtual Library" with book summaries and Parent News newsletters as well as "Parents ask ERIC" question-answer service.

**TEACHER NOTES** continued

National PTA Education Resource Libraries

[www.pta.org/programs/edulibr.htm](http://www.pta.org/programs/edulibr.htm)

Numerous short articles (many in Spanish) on parent involvement issues from early childhood education through high school.

Videos

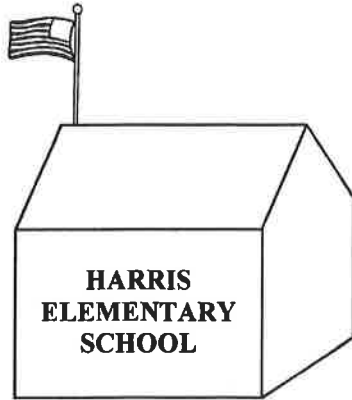
*Crossroads Café* (1996). Unit 2, "Growing Pains," and Unit 21, "Walls and Bridges" (issues concerning high school work-study programs). A 26-part video program available from Intelcom, [www.intelecom.com](http://www.intelecom.com). Textbooks available from Heinle & Heinle, [www.heinle.com](http://www.heinle.com). Videos can be used independently of textbooks.

*Raising Children In Troubled Times*. Set of 15 videos and facilitator guides (in English and Spanish) on general parenting topics and school-related topics including *Studying, Homework, and School Behavior*. American Guidance Service Publishing, (800) 328-2560, [www.agsnet.com](http://www.agsnet.com)

\* This list of resources is also located at [www.thecenterweb.org](http://www.thecenterweb.org) (click on "The Adult Learning Resource Center") where it is updated annually.

PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

public schools

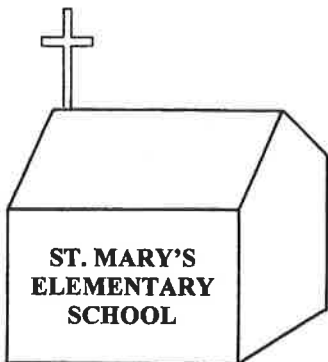


property taxes



2003  
Property Tax  
Bill

private schools

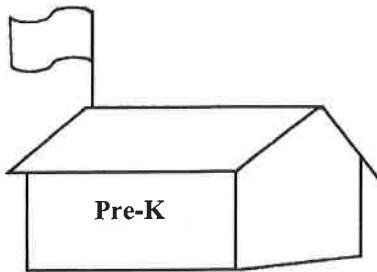


tuition

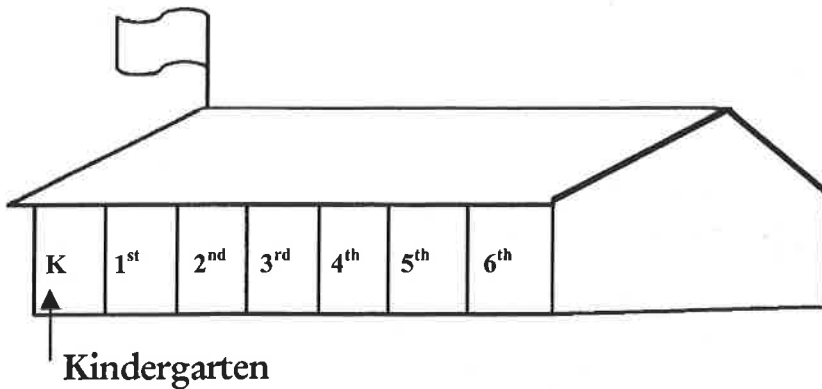


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

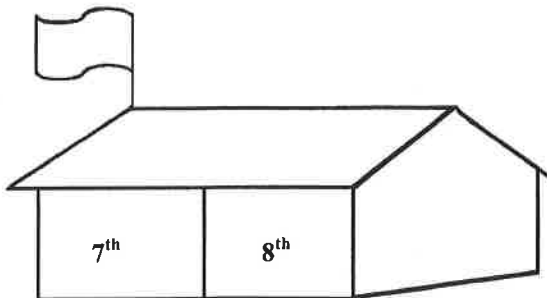
KINDS OF SCHOOLS



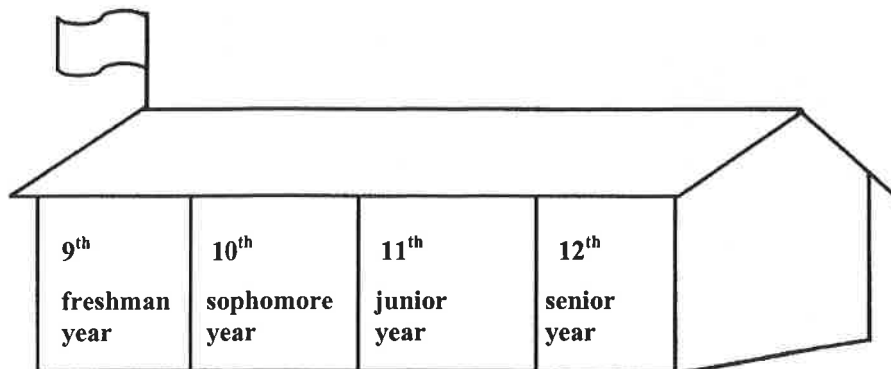
preschool



elementary school



middle school/  
junior high school



high school

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PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

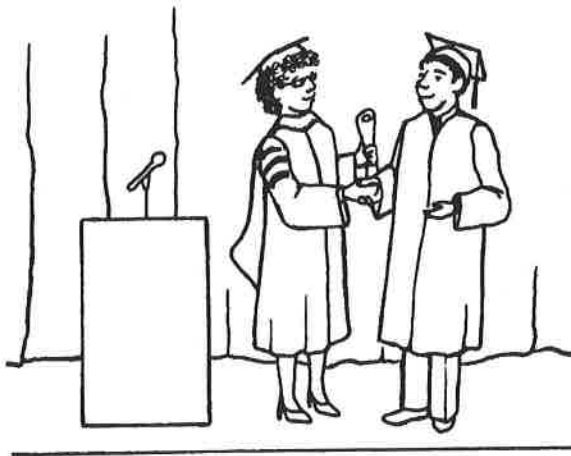
ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_  
(your local school district)

*Directions:* How are schools organized in your local school district? Draw pictures like the ones on the preceding page.

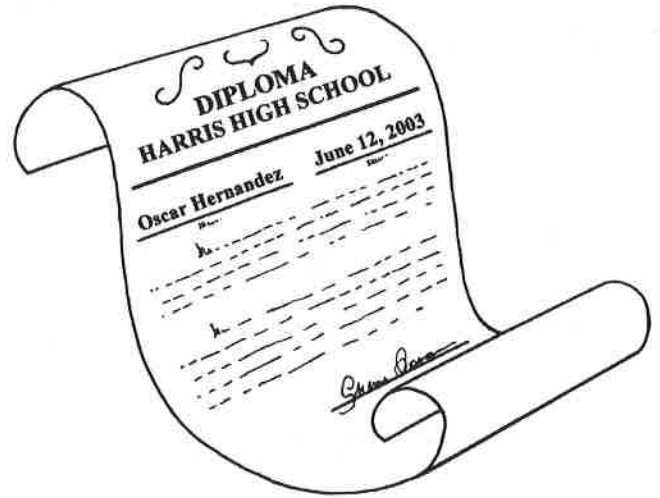


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

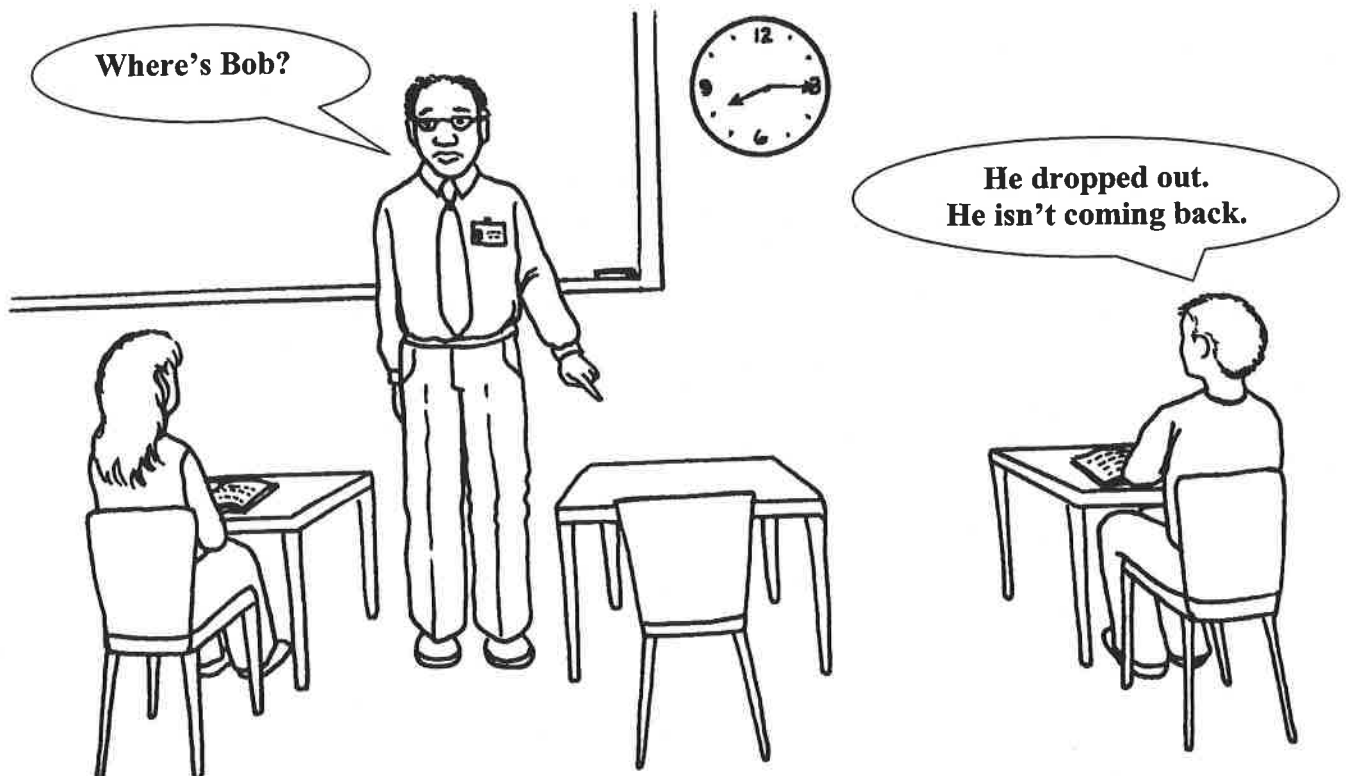
graduate



diploma



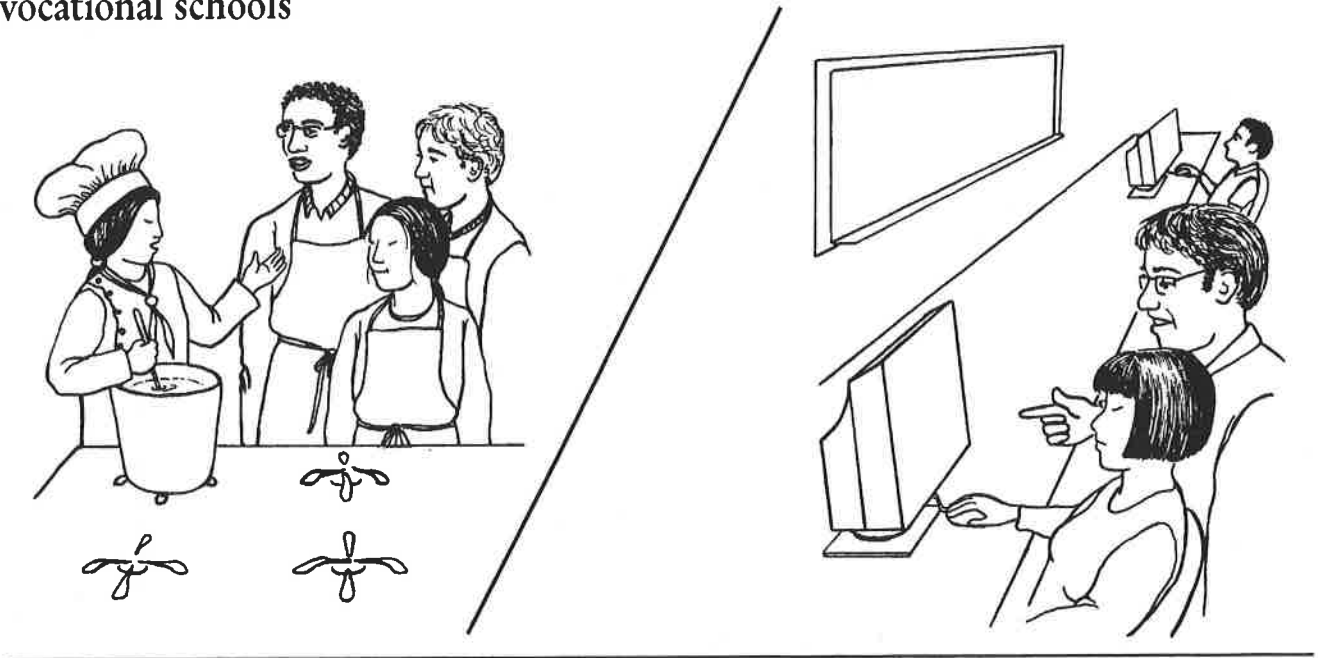
drop out



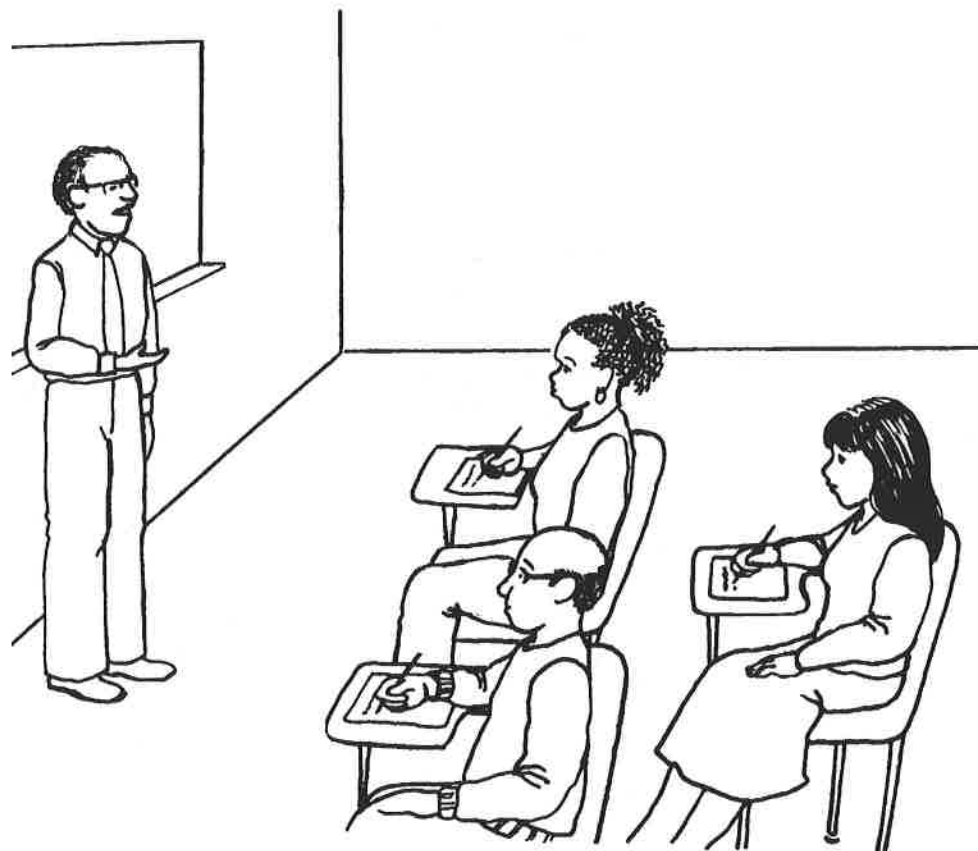
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

vocational schools



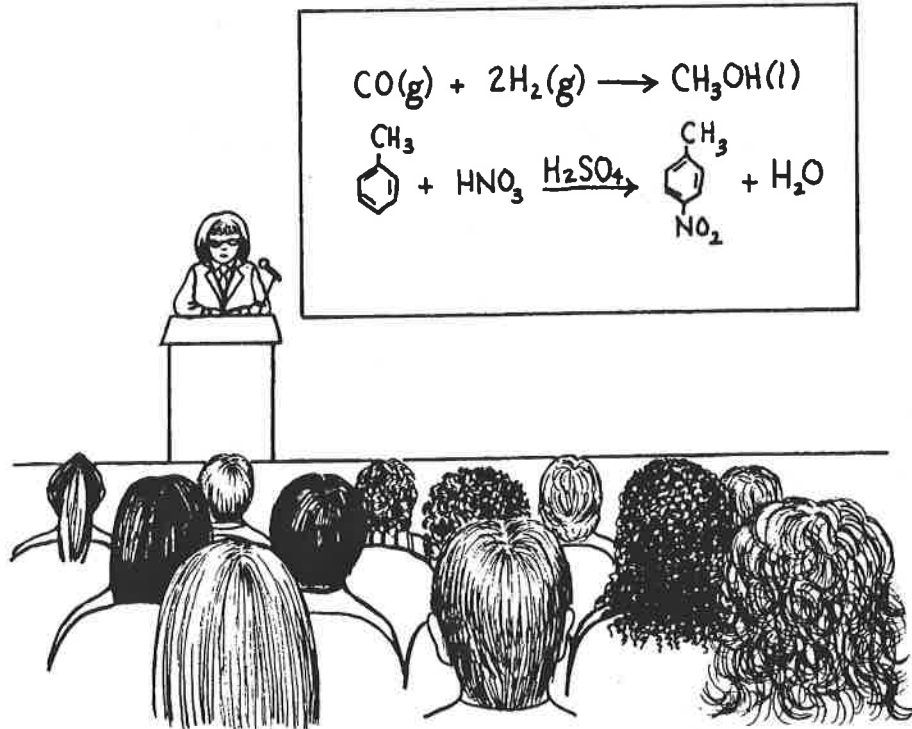
community colleges  
(2 years)



## PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

## AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

university/college  
(4 years)



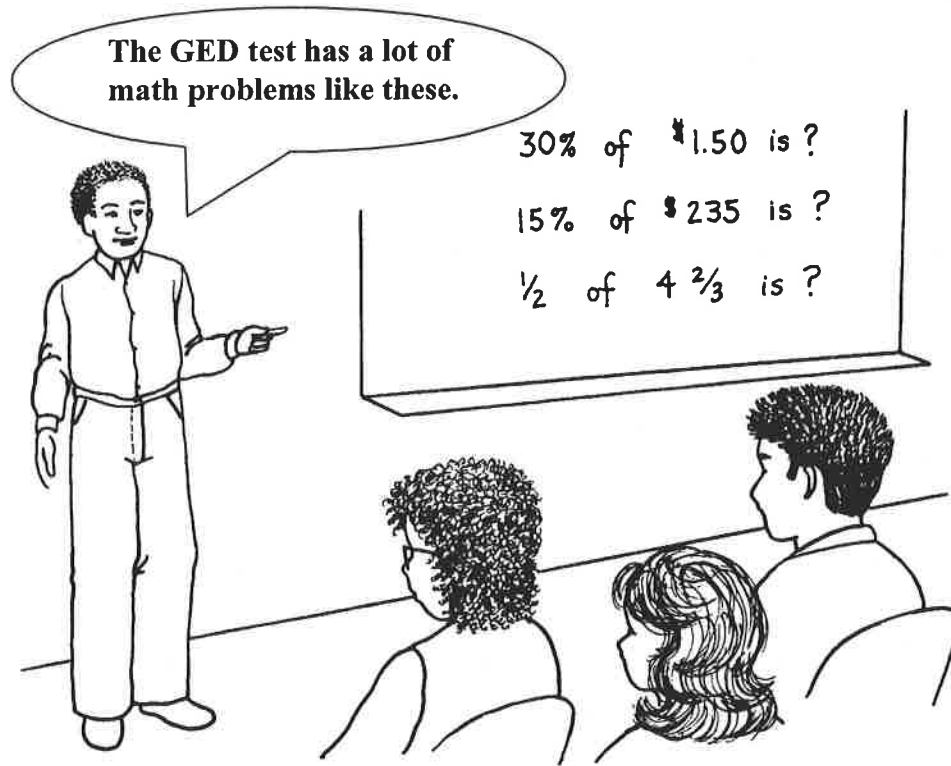
financial aid



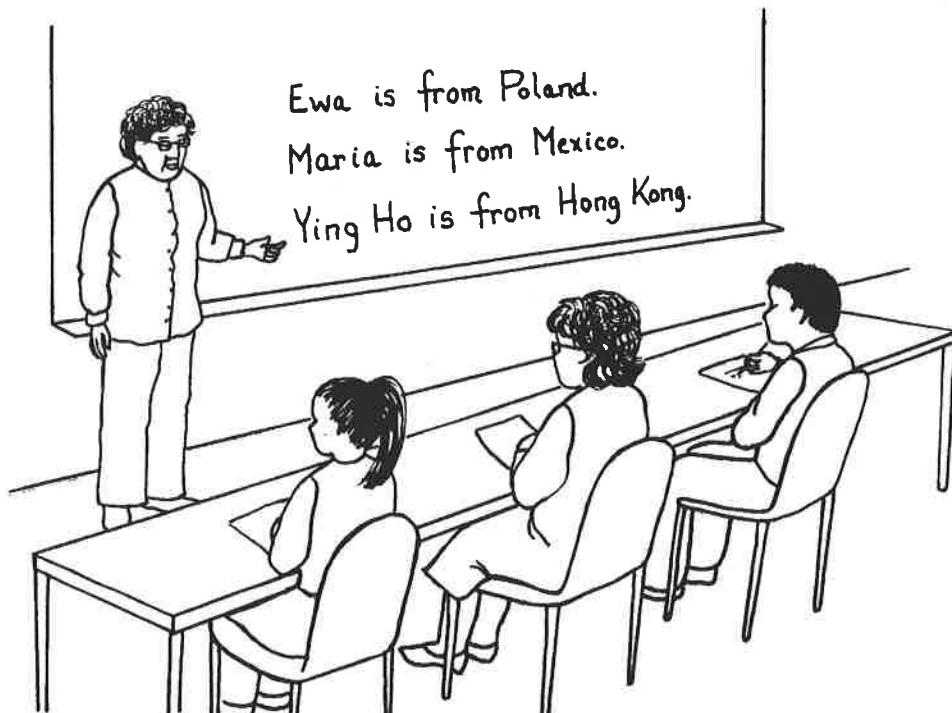
## PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

## ADULT EDUCATION

## GED classes



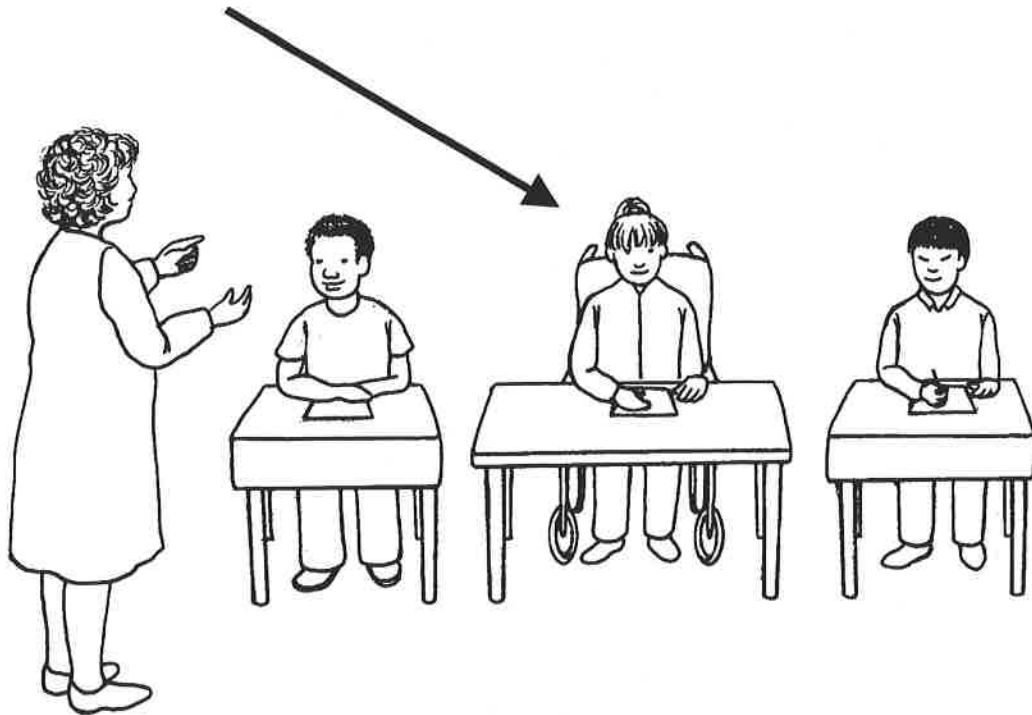
## ESL classes



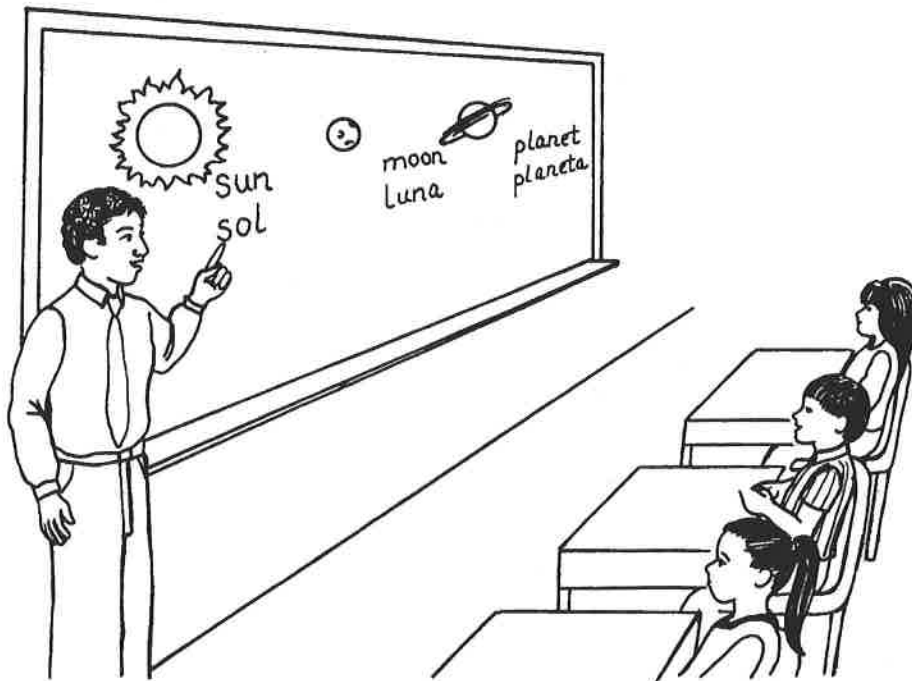
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

SPECIAL SERVICES

physical differences



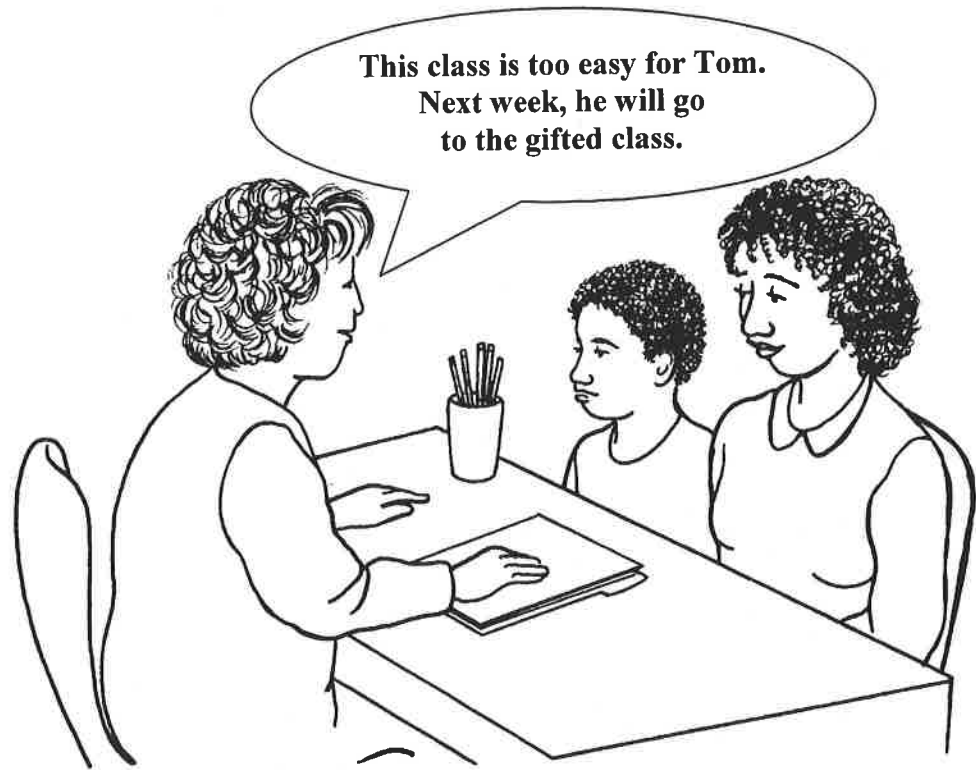
bilingual program



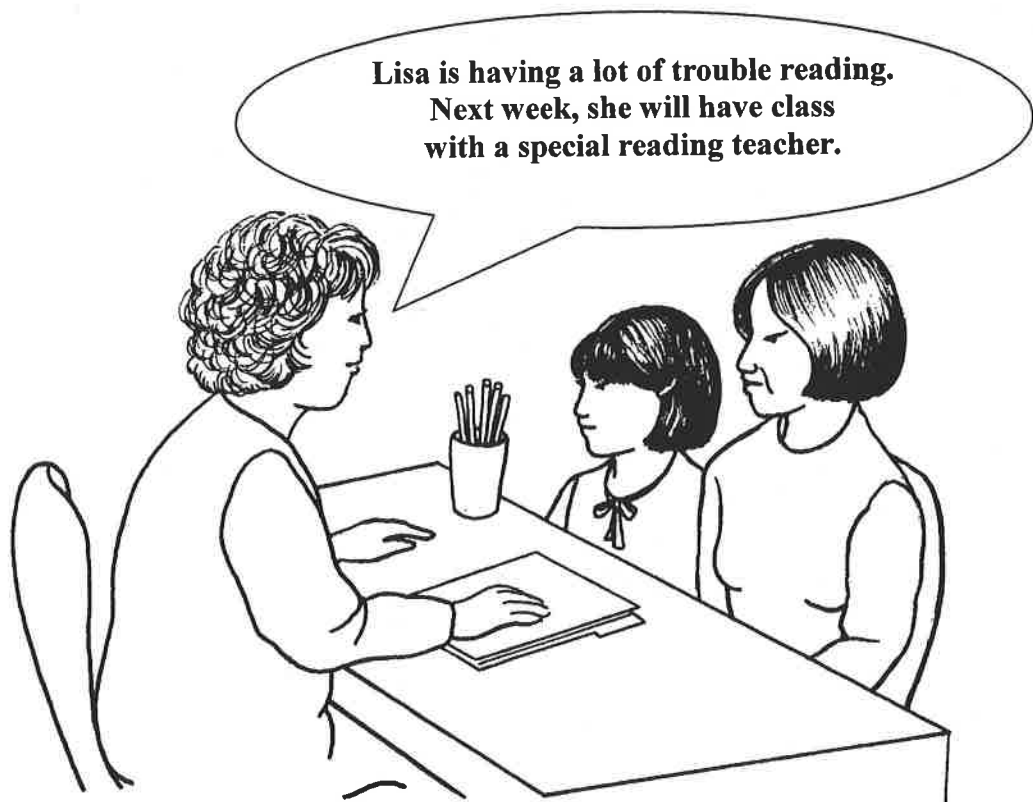
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

SPECIAL SERVICES

gifted program



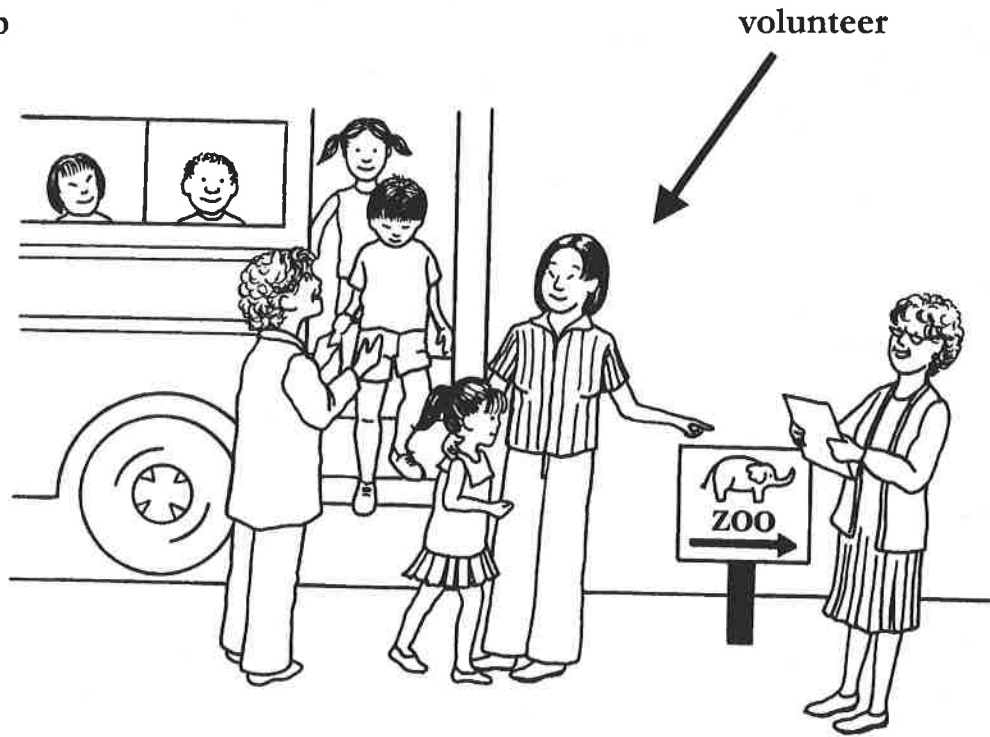
reading help



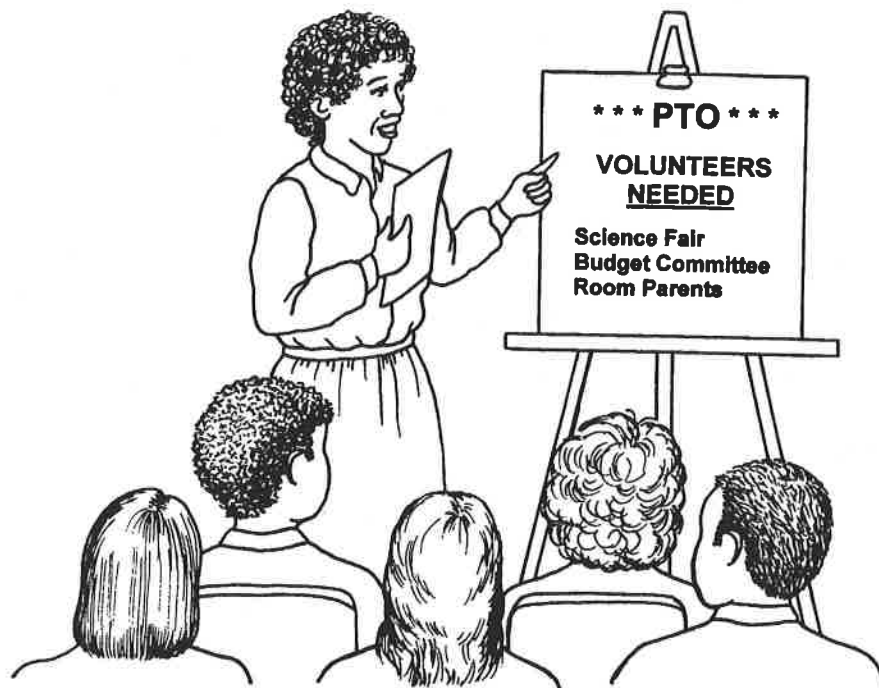
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

PARENT PARTICIPATION

field trip



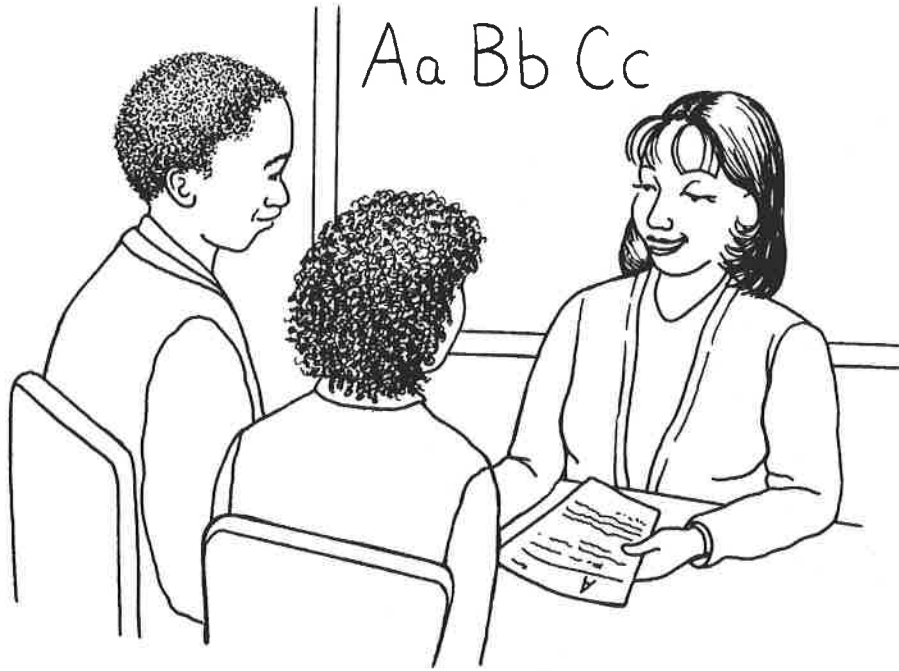
parent-teacher organization (PTO/PTA)



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

PARENT PARTICIPATION

parent-teacher conference



attend activities at the school

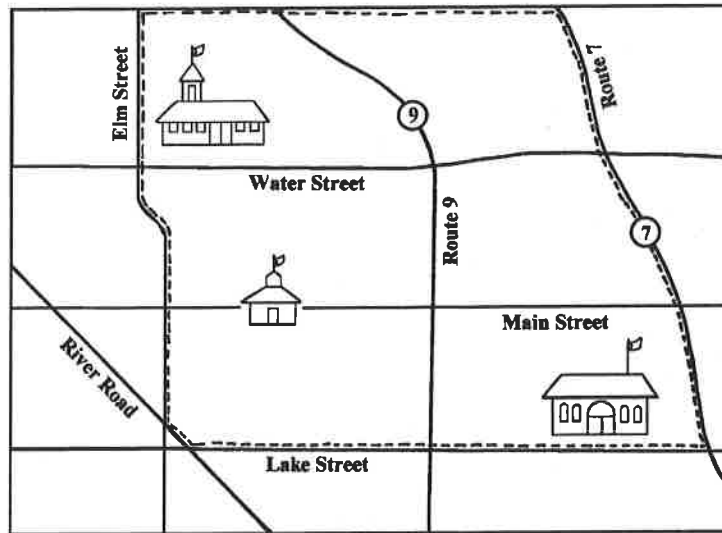




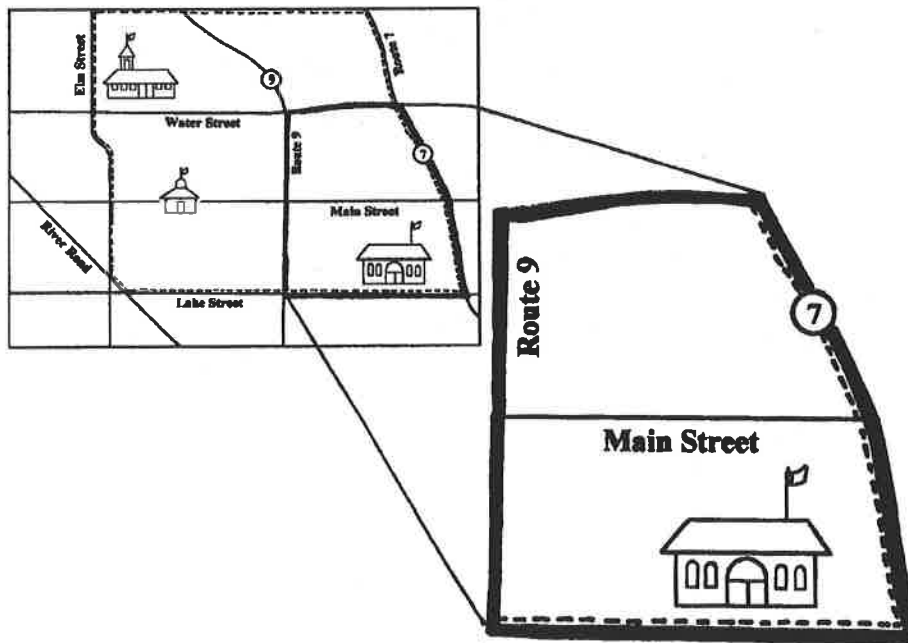
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

school district



attendance area

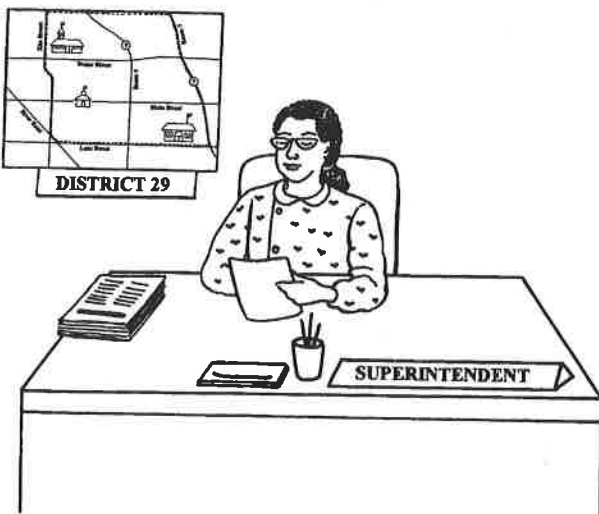


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

school board/board of education



superintendent

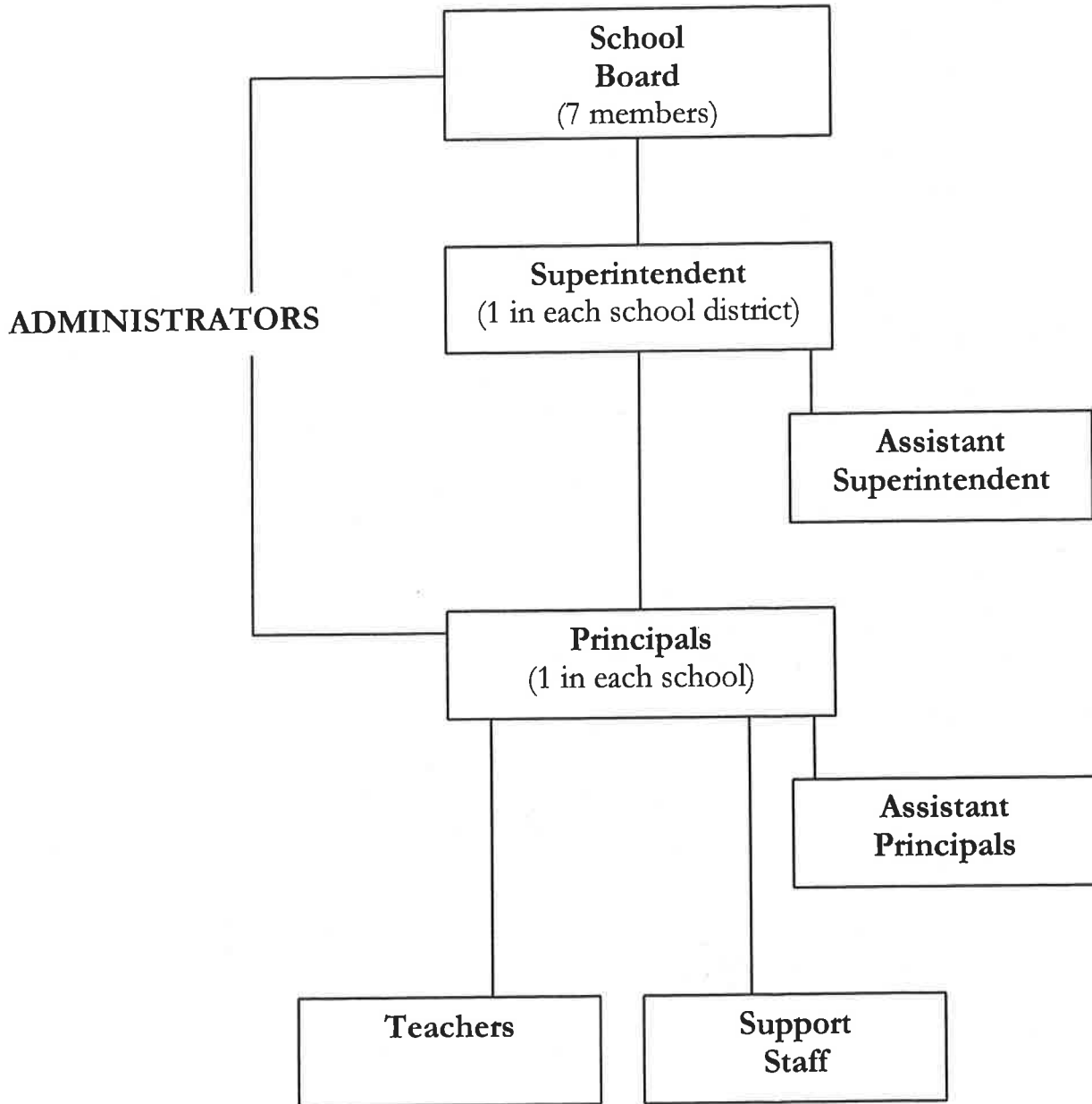


principal



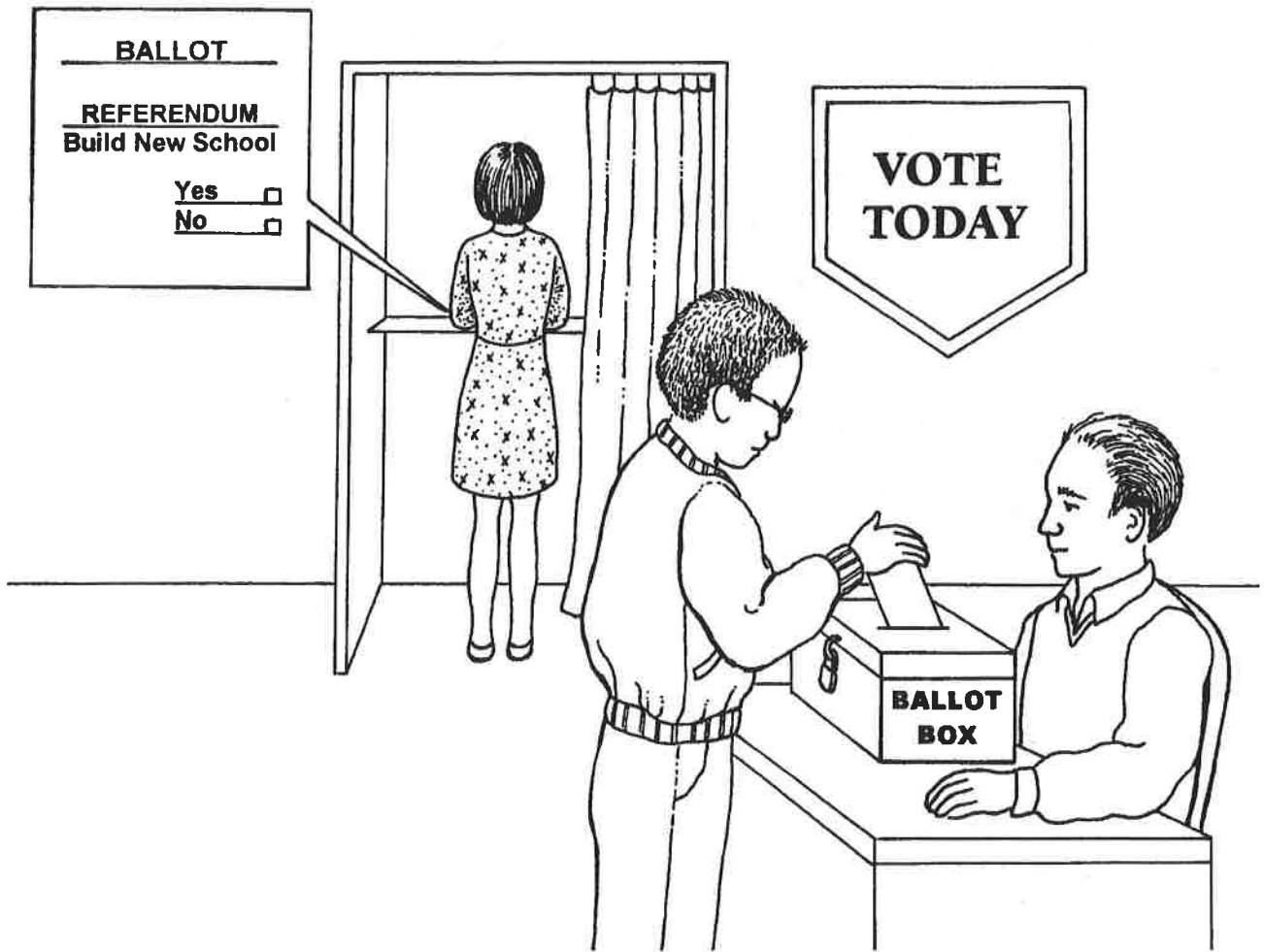
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

POSSIBLE ORGANIZATION  
OF  
SCHOOL DISTRICT PERSONNEL

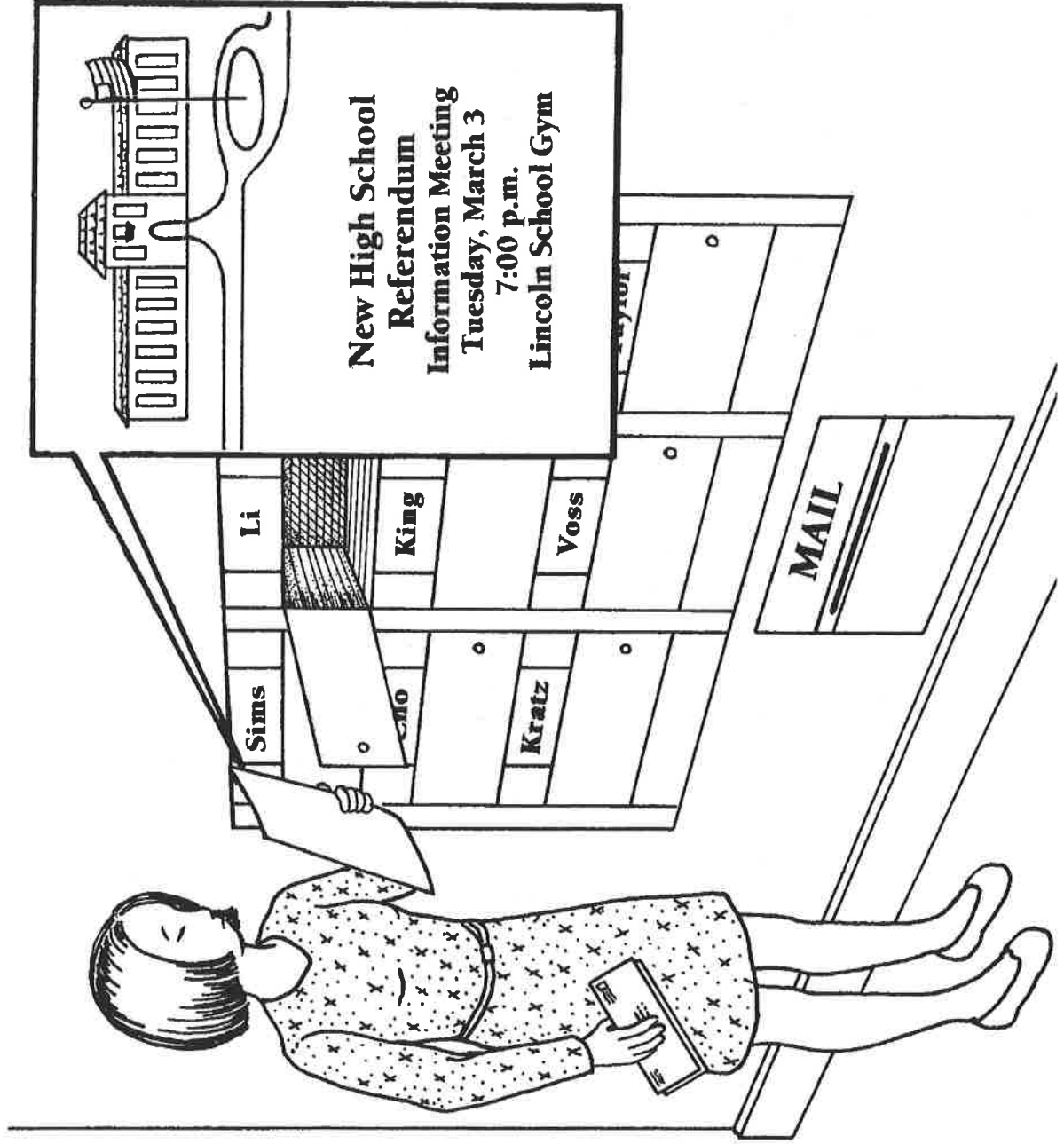


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

ballot/referendum

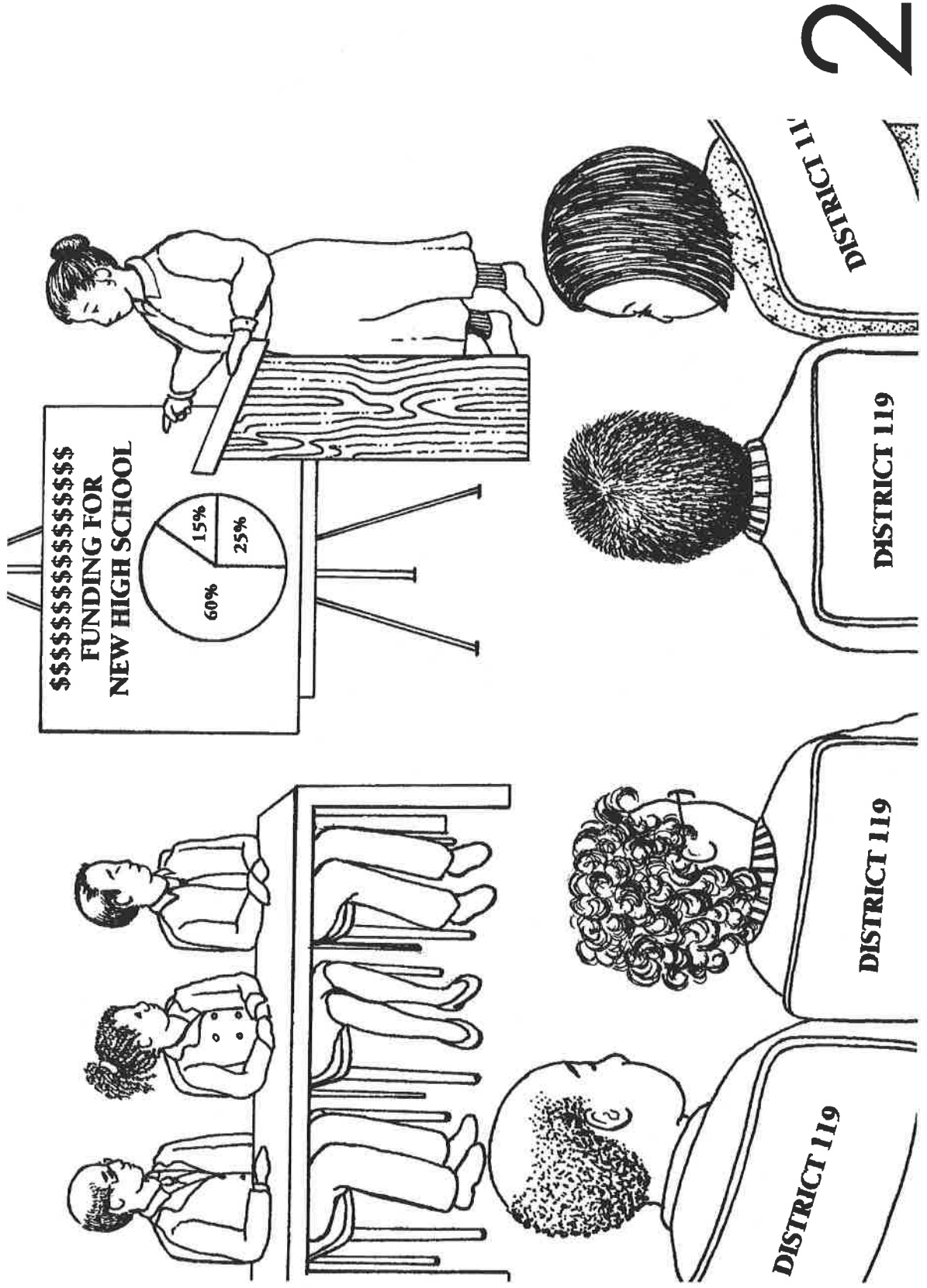


PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

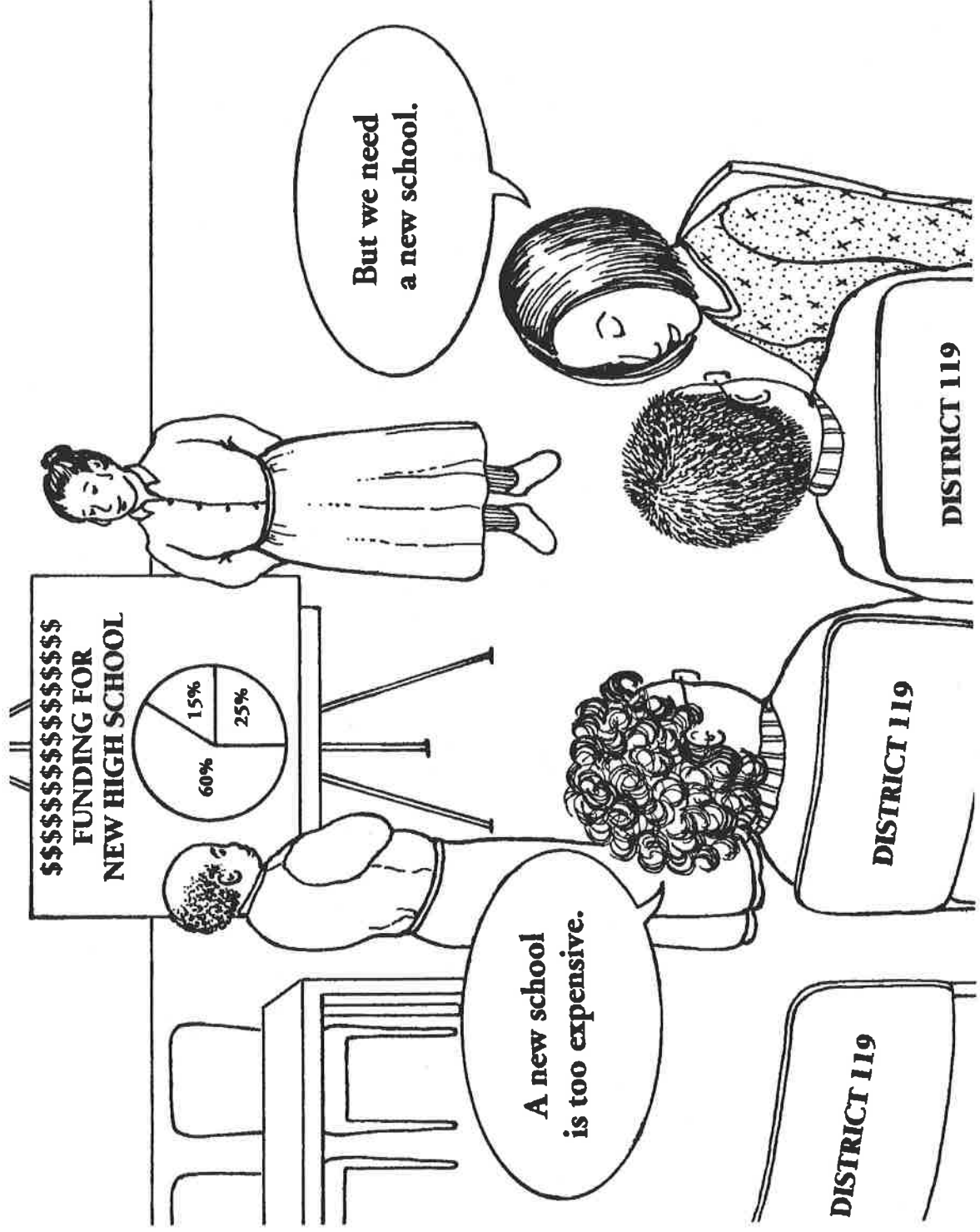


1

PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

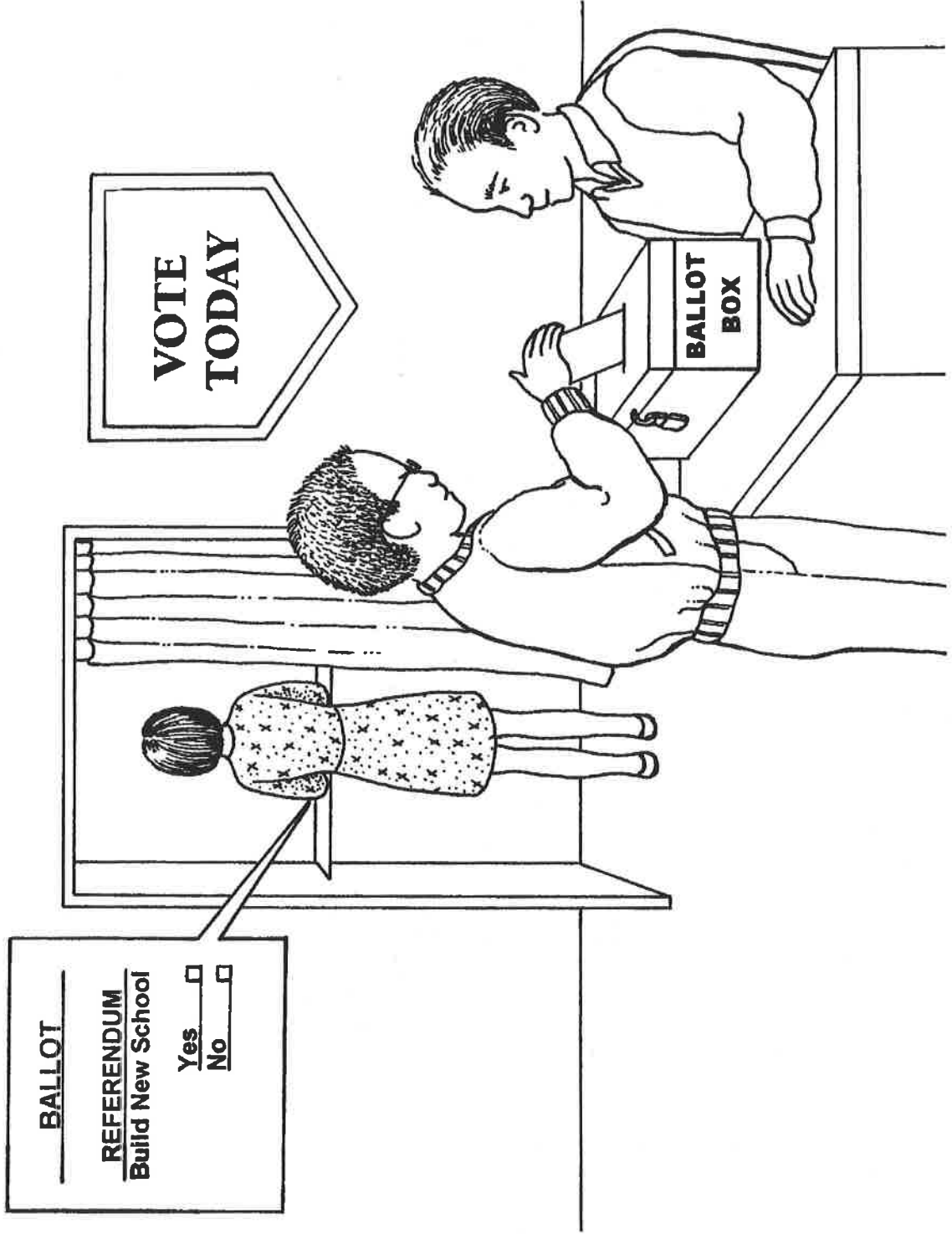


PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued



3

PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

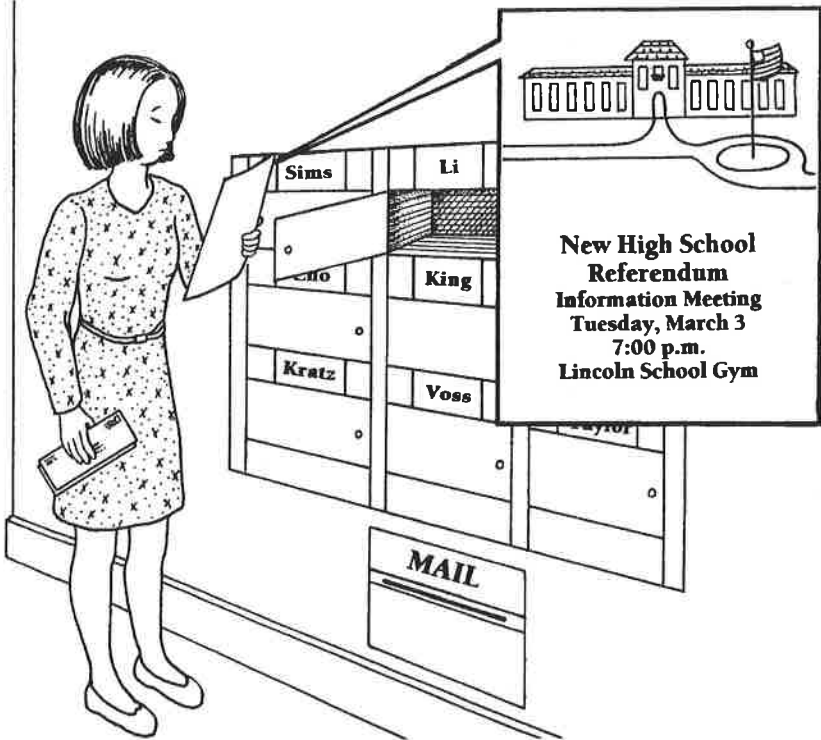


4

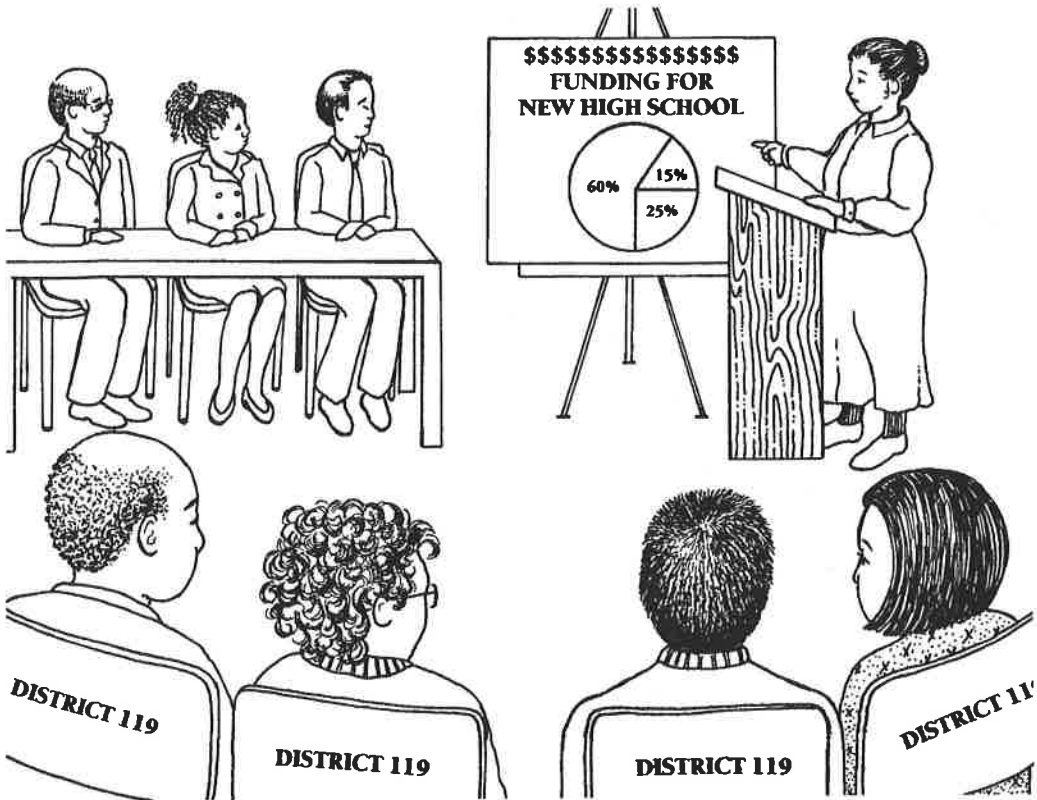


PICTURES FOR GROUP STORY WRITING

Directions: Work in groups of three or four. Write a story about the pictures below and on the next page. Write one or more sentences for each picture. Then share your story with the class.

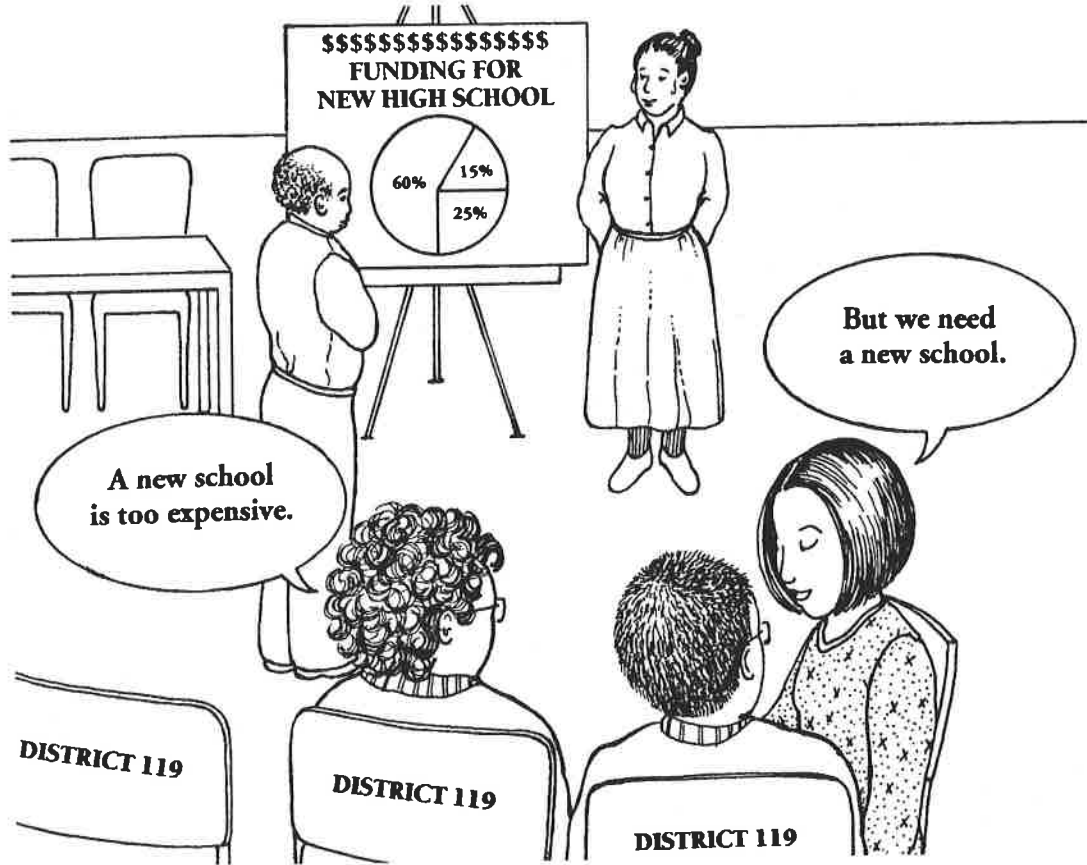


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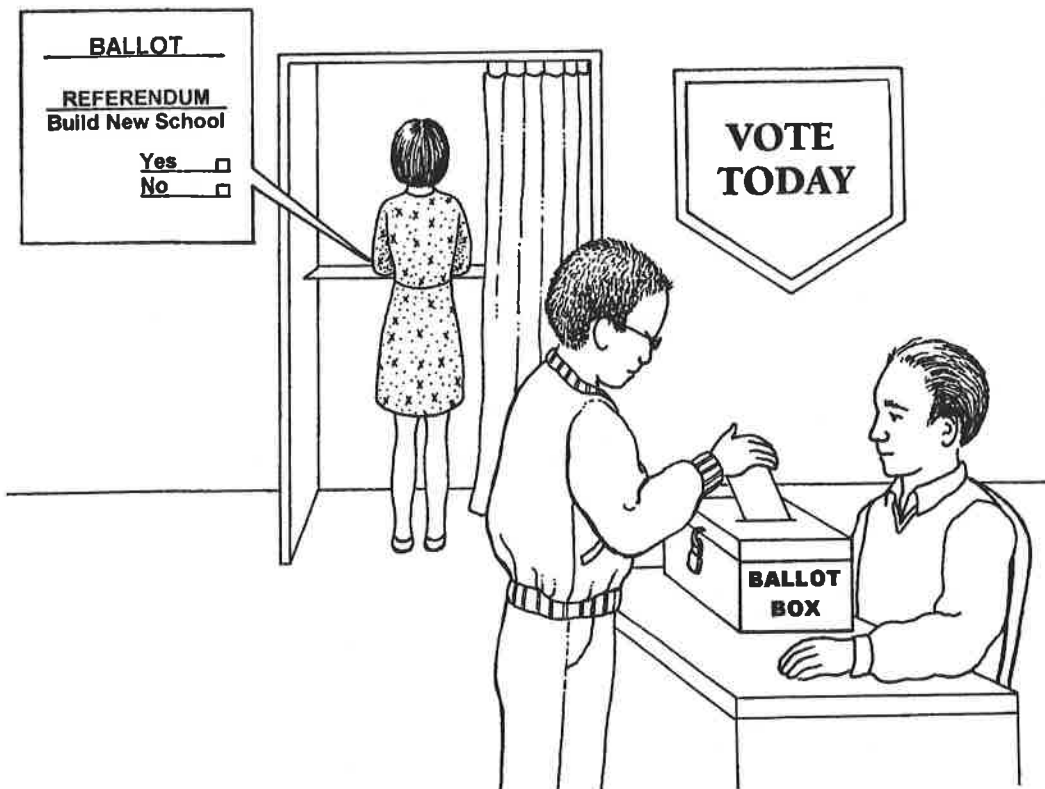


2

PICTURES FOR GROUP STORY WRITING continued



3



4

**READING PASSAGE: Pre-Reading Activity**

*Directions:* Think about schools in your native country. Discuss the answers to the questions below with your classmates. (Optional: Write the answers to the questions.)

1. Do all children go to school? Is it important for children to attend school every day?
2. Is school free? Do families have to pay for their children to go to school? Where does the money for schools come from?
3. At what age do children usually begin school? For how many years do children usually go to school?
4. How are schools organized? Do children of different ages go to different school buildings?
5. Are parents involved in their children's education? How?
6. Are universities free? Do many children get a university education?
7. Who makes decisions about the schools?

Now talk about this question with your classmates:  
How is the United States school system different from the school system in your native country?

## READING PASSAGE

Most communities have schools for children. There are 2 types of schools: public schools and private schools.

Public schools are free. Sometimes parents have to pay for books and supplies, but they don't have to pay tuition. Most of the money to pay for public schools comes from property taxes. If you own a home, you pay property taxes each year. If you rent a house or apartment, your landlord uses part of your rent to pay property taxes. Public schools also get money from the federal and state government, so they have to follow government policies or rules.

Private schools are not free. Parents have to pay tuition for private schools. Private schools decide how much tuition parents have to pay. Because private schools don't get money from the federal or state government, they don't have to follow government policies. Many private schools are affiliated with a religion.

### KINDS OF SCHOOLS

Preschool: Many children begin preschool when they are 3 or 4 years old. Some preschools are public and some are private. In preschool, children play with other children and learn to listen to the teacher.

Kindergarten: Children who are 5 years old on or before September 1 can go to kindergarten. Children do not have to go to kindergarten, but most children do. Most kindergartens are public. Kindergarten classes usually meet for half a day, Monday through Friday. There are some full-day kindergartens, too.

Elementary School: School years in the United States are called grades. Elementary schools usually have kindergarten and grades 1 to 6. All children who are 6 years old must attend grade 1, called first grade.

Middle School/Junior High School: After elementary school, children attend middle school or junior high school. Middle schools and junior high schools usually have grades 7 and 8, but middle schools can have grades 5 or 6 too. Sometimes middle schools or junior high schools are in the same building as elementary schools.

High School: After middle school or junior high school, children begin high school. High schools usually have grades 9 to 12, but some schools have 10 to 12. High schools prepare students for jobs or for study after high school at community colleges, universities, or vocational schools.

When children finish their last year of high school, grade 12, they are usually 18 years old. In the United States, all children must go to school until they are 16 years old. It is important for children to attend school every day. Most children graduate from high school. But sometimes children do not finish high school. Some drop out before they graduate. It is important for all children to finish high school and to receive their high school diplomas.

**READING PASSAGE** continued

After High School: Students who graduate from high school can continue to study at community colleges, vocational schools, or universities. Vocational schools prepare students to work in certain fields, such as cooking or computer programming. Community colleges and universities offer degrees in many fields. There are both public and private 4-year universities and colleges in the United States, and they can be very expensive. Community colleges are 2-year public schools, but they are not free. Many families work hard to help pay for their children to attend community colleges and universities. Students can also apply for financial aid such as scholarships or loans. High schools, colleges, and universities can provide families with information about financial aid.

Adult Education: In the United States, everyone can go to school—even older adults. There are many learning opportunities for adults. Many classes are free, but some charge tuition. Classes are offered during the day, in the evening, and on weekends. Classes for adults are often held at community colleges, schools, libraries, and community centers. Some adult education classes are:

- English as a Second Language (ESL): to learn basic English language skills
- GED and Basic Skills: to learn basic reading and math skills, and to prepare for the GED test (high school completion test)

When adults have good English skills and a high school or GED diploma, they can apply to study at a college or university for a degree.

**SPECIAL SERVICES**

Public schools must provide education to all students, including those with special needs. Some students have physical differences, such as blindness, deafness, or difficulty moving their bodies. Some students have trouble learning and need special help. Schools may have gifted programs for very smart students. Some schools provide bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for students who don't speak much English. Parents should talk to the school principal or their child's teacher if their child needs special services.

**PARENT PARTICIPATION**

Schools want parents to participate in their children's education. Parents should:

- Give their children a place and time to do homework.
- Show interest in their children's school work.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Attend other meetings and activities in the school.

If parents want to know how their children are doing in school, they can talk to the teacher, the principal, or other school staff members. It is a good idea to make an appointment before going to the school.

**READING PASSAGE** continued

Schools need volunteers to help in many ways. Volunteers work without pay. Parents can volunteer to:

- Go on field trips with their children's classes.
- Help with school parties or dances.
- Talk to classes about their jobs or their native countries.

Many schools have a parent-teacher organization. This group of parents and teachers plan programs for the school, its families, and the community. For example, they can organize volunteers to help teachers in their classrooms. Sometimes this group is called the PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) or the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association).

**PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Public schools are grouped into school districts. Some school districts include only one city or town, but other districts have more than one city or town. Each school district has 1 or more attendance areas. Children may attend public schools only in the attendance area where they live.

Each school district has a school board or board of education. The members of a school board live in their school district. Registered voters from each school district elect the school board members. To be a member, a person must be at least 18 years old, live in that school district, and be a U.S. citizen. Parents and non-parents can be members of their district's school board.

The school board makes decisions about the schools in the district. For example, the school board hires a superintendent, the administrator of the school district. The school board also hires and fires school principals. They may also decide how money is spent. The school board has to follow policies made by the state and federal government.

Sometimes community members help make decisions about schools. For example, a school-related issue might be on the ballot as a referendum on voting day. A referendum is a question on the ballot for people to vote "Yes" or "No."

**A TRUE STORY**

District 119 wanted to build a new high school. They decided to put a referendum on the ballot on voting day. The school board held a meeting to tell community members about the new school and the referendum.

Susan Li went to the meeting. She learned that the money to build the new school would come from higher property taxes. On voting day, the people in District 119 could vote "Yes" or "No" to have higher property taxes and build a new school. Susan voted on voting day.

## READING PASSAGE continued

**COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

Kind of School	Degree Received	Typical Length of Study	Admission Requirements
Community College	A.A. (Associate of Arts) or A.S. (Associate of Science)	2 years	High School Diploma or GED Certificate
4-year College or University	B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) or B.S. (Bachelor of Science)	4 years	High School Diploma or GED Certificate
Graduate School (at a university)	M.A. (Master of Arts) or M.S. (Master of Science)	2 years after B.A./B.S.	Bachelor's Degree
	Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy)	3 or more years after M.A./M.S.	Master's Degree

## READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 1

*Directions:* There are different ways to say the names of the grades in United States schools. Say these words after your teacher. How old are most children when they start these grades? Write the ages on the lines.

GRADE			CHILD'S AGE (approximate)
preschool			_____
kindergarten			_____
grade 1	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	first grade	_____
grade 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	second grade	_____
grade 3	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	third grade	_____
grade 4	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	fourth grade	_____
grade 5	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	fifth grade	_____
grade 6	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	sixth grade	_____
grade 7	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	seventh grade	_____
grade 8	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	eighth grade	_____
grade 9	9 <sup>th</sup> grade	ninth grade <i>freshman year</i>	_____
grade 10	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	tenth grade <i>sophomore year</i>	_____
grade 11	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	eleventh grade <i>junior year</i>	_____
grade 12	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	twelfth grade <i>senior year</i>	_____



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**READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 2-A**

*Directions:* Say these words after your teacher. Discuss the meaning of each word.  
(Optional: Write the meaning next to each word.)

1. public schools
2. property taxes
3. private schools
4. tuition
5. preschool
6. kindergarten
7. elementary school
8. middle school/junior high school
9. high school
10. graduate (*noun or verb*)
11. drop out (*noun or verb*)
12. diploma
13. community colleges
14. vocational schools
15. universities
16. financial aid

Other new words:

## READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 2-B

*Directions:* Write the letter of the correct meaning next to each word.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| _____ 1. public school                        | a. a 4-year school for students after high school                 |
| _____ 2. property taxes                       | b. a school for grades 9-12 or 10-12                              |
| _____ 3. private school                       | c. to finish school with a diploma or degree                      |
| _____ 4. tuition                              | d. money that people pay to attend school                         |
| _____ 5. preschool                            | e. money that property owners pay to the county                   |
| _____ 6. kindergarten                         | f. a school where students learn a job or trade after high school |
| _____ 7. elementary school                    | g. a school for children age 3-4                                  |
| _____ 8. middle school/<br>junior high school | h. a certificate or document for students when they finish school |
| _____ 9. high school                          | i. to quit school before graduation                               |
| _____ 10. graduate                            | j. a school that is paid for by private money, not by taxes       |
| _____ 11. drop out                            | k. a school for grades 6-8 or 7-8                                 |
| _____ 12. diploma                             | l. a year of school for children age 5                            |
| _____ 13. community college                   | m. a school for grades 1-6  |
| _____ 14. vocational school                   | n. scholarships or loans to help students pay for school          |
| _____ 15. university                          | o. a school open to the public and supported by taxes             |
| _____ 16. financial aid                       | p. a 2-year school for students after high school                 |

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**READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 3-A**

*Directions:* Say these words after your teacher. Discuss the meaning of each word.  
(Optional: Write the meaning next to each word.)

1. special services
2. participate
3. principal
4. volunteer (*noun or verb*)
5. field trip
6. parent-teacher conference
7. parent-teacher organization (PTO, PTA)
8. school district
9. attendance area
10. school board/board of education
11. superintendent
12. ballot
13. referendum/referenda (*plural*)

Other new words:

**READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 3-B**

*Directions:* Write the correct word or words in each sentence. Use the word bank for help. Each word can be used only once.

1. A person who works without pay is a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The leader of a school is the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. School children sometimes take \_\_\_\_\_ to museums, theatres, zoos, or other interesting places.
4. At a \_\_\_\_\_ parents can talk with their children's teachers.
5. Ways parents can \_\_\_\_\_ in their children's education are to attend parent-teacher conferences or volunteer in the school.
6. A group of parents and teachers who plan programs for schools, families, and the community is a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Each \_\_\_\_\_ has a school board to make decisions about the schools.
8. Juan cannot go to Franklin School because he does not live in the \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The voters in the school district elect the members of the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The administrator of the school district is the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. In an election, the \_\_\_\_\_ lists the candidates and issues.
12. People vote on school-related issues called \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Public schools must provide \_\_\_\_\_ to children with special learning needs or physical differences.

**WORD BANK**

attendance area	ballot	parent-teacher conference
principal	field trips	participate
school district	referenda	school board/board of education
special services	superintendent	volunteer
	parent-teacher organization (PTO, PTA)	

**READING PASSAGE: Comprehension Check**

*Directions:* The sentences below are about schools in the United States. Take turns reading each sentence with a partner. Decide if each sentence is TRUE or FALSE. Put an X under TRUE or FALSE. (Optional: Correct the false sentences.)

	TRUE	FALSE
1. Property taxes help to pay for public schools.	_____	_____
2. Parents have to pay tuition for public schools.	_____	_____
3. All children go to preschool.	_____	_____
4. Most children who are 5 years old go to kindergarten.	_____	_____
5. Children who are 6 years old must go to school.	_____	_____
6. Elementary schools usually have kindergarten and grades 1 to 12.	_____	_____
7. High schools usually have grades 9 to 12.	_____	_____
8. Children always graduate from high school.	_____	_____
9. All children must go to school from age 6 to age 16.	_____	_____
10. It is important for children to attend school every day.	_____	_____
11. Community colleges and universities are free.	_____	_____
12. Schools want parents to be active in their children's education.	_____	_____
13. It's a good idea for parents to make an appointment before they visit the school.	_____	_____

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**READING PASSAGE: Comprehension Check continued**

- |   | TRUE  | FALSE |
|---|-------|-------|
| 14. All school districts have a school board to make decisions about the schools. | _____ | _____ |
| 15. The superintendent elects school board members.                               | _____ | _____ |
| 16. The superintendent is the administrator of the school district.               | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Sometimes important school issues are on the ballot as referenda.             | _____ | _____ |

**DIALOGUE 1: Reporting an Absence on the School Answering Machine**

*Directions:* Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

María López is sick and can't go to school today. Her mother calls the school before school starts and leaves a message on the school answering machine.

Answering machine: This is Lincoln School. Please leave a message after the beep.  
(Pause) Beep

Parent: This is Mrs. López. My daughter is sick and can't come to school today. Her name is María López. She is in Mrs. Black's third grade class. Thank you.

**Note to the Teacher:** The goal of Dialogue 1 is to teach learners to report a child's absence on the school answering machine. Many schools use an automated phone system or answering machine to take calls from parents or guardians reporting their child's absence. It is important that learners hear the actual recording from their child's school. You can obtain such a recording from the school office or make your own recording using a telephone pick-up device (with the school's permission). These devices are available for about \$5 at electronic stores.

**DIALOGUE 2: Calling the School to Report a Child's Absence**

*Directions:* Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

María López is sick and can't go to school today. Her mother calls the school in the morning before school starts.

Secretary: Good morning, Lincoln School.

Parent: Hello, this is Mrs. López.

Secretary: How can I help you, Mrs. López?

Parent: My daughter is sick. She has a fever. She can't come to school today.

Secretary: What's her name?

Parent: María López.

Secretary: Who is her teacher?

Parent: Mrs. Black.

Secretary: Okay. I'll tell Mrs. Black. Thank you for calling. Goodbye.

Parent: Thank you. Good bye.



**DIALOGUE 3: Calling the School for Information**

*Directions:* Practice this dialogue with a partner. Use the information in the box at the bottom of the page to complete the dialog.

A parent calls his son's high school to ask a question. He talks to the school clerk.

School Clerk: Good morning. Wilson High School.

Parent: Yes, this is \_\_\_\_\_ . I have a question  
(your name)  
about the \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(event)

School clerk: Yes. What do you want to know?

Parent: When is it?

School clerk: It's on \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(day and date)

Parent: Okay. And what time does it start?

School clerk: It starts at \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(time)

Parent: I see. And where will it be held?

School clerk: In the \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(location)

Parent: Thank you very much. Good bye.

School clerk: You're welcome. Good bye.

Event	Day and Date	Time	Location
New Student Orientation	Saturday, August 30 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 a.m.	student cafeteria
Winter Concert	Friday, January 17 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 p.m.	school gym
School Board Meeting	Monday, November 5 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 p.m.	school auditorium

**DIALOGUE 4: Teacher Calling Parent for Classroom Assistance**

*Directions:* Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

A geography teacher calls a parent to ask a favor. He wants the parent to come to his classroom to talk about the parent's native country, China.

*Phone rings*

Parent: Hello?

Teacher: Hello. Could I please speak to Mr. or Mrs. Chan?

Parent: This is Mrs. Chan.

Teacher: My name is Mr. Garfield. I'm your son's geography teacher.

Parent: Oh, no. Does he have a problem?

Teacher: No, not at all! He's a good student. But I have a favor to ask of you or your husband. We're studying about China. Do you think you or your husband could come and talk about China? And maybe answer some questions?

Parent: What kind of questions?

Teacher: The students will probably ask about the weather and the food, and maybe a little bit about your government. Do you think you can come?

Parent: I'll talk to my husband. I think one of us can come.

Teacher: Thank you. I think you'll enjoy it!

**ROLE PLAY ACTIVITY: Phone Calls to and from the School**

*Directions:* Here are 4 situations. Discuss each situation with your classmate. With a partner, choose 1 of the situations and plan a conversation about it. Then present your conversation to the class. (Optional: Write your conversation.)

<p><b>1-A. You are the school nurse.</b></p> <p>Call Mrs. García and tell her that her son has a fever. Ask her if she can come to school and take him home.</p>	<p><b>1-B. You are Mrs. García.</b></p> <p>The school nurse will call to tell you that your son Ramón has a fever. Tell the nurse that your friend will bring you to school in an hour.</p>
<p><b>2-A. You are Mrs. Wong.</b></p> <p>The school nurse will call you and tell you that Yu Li is hurt. Ask what is wrong and then say that you will pick her up right away.</p>	<p><b>2-B. You are the school nurse.</b></p> <p>Yu Li Wong slipped and has a big bump on her head. You put ice on it, but the child is upset. Call Mrs. Wong and ask her to take Yu Li home.</p>
<p><b>3-A. You are the school secretary.</b></p> <p>Pramod Shah fell in the gym and broke his arm. Call his father at work and tell him that the school is taking Pramod to the hospital.</p>	<p><b>3-B. You are Mr. Shah.</b></p> <p>When the school secretary calls you to tell you about your son's accident, ask if he is all right. Then tell her that you will go to the hospital.</p>
<p><b>4-A. You are Mrs. Polanski.</b></p> <p>Your daughter Anna was sick yesterday and the doctor says she must stay in bed all week. Call the school and tell the secretary that Anna cannot come to school this week. Ask how you can get your daughter's books and assignments.</p>	<p><b>4-B. You are the school secretary.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Polanski will call you to tell you that Anna will not be in school this week. Tell Mrs. Polanski that she can come to school this afternoon at 3:30 to find out about her daughter's assignments.</p>

**ACTION RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Children's Schools**

*Directions:* Complete the chart below about 3 or more children. You can write about:

- your own children
- your nieces or nephews
- your neighbors' children, or
- some other children you know

CHILD'S NAME	AGE	GRADE	NAME OF SCHOOL

**PAIR ACTIVITY 1: Children's Schools**

*Directions:* Work with a partner. Ask your partner the questions below about each of the children in his/her Action Research chart. Then write the information in the chart below.

- What is the child's name? Please spell that.
- How old is the child?
- What grade is the child in?
- What school does the child go to?

CHILD'S NAME	AGE	GRADE	NAME OF SCHOOL

Now tell the class about the children in your partner's chart. (Optional: Write a paragraph about the children in your partner's chart.)

**PAIR ACTIVITY 2: The School Calendar**

*Directions:* Work with a partner. Your teacher will give you a local school calendar to use. Write the information from the calendar on the lines. Then circle the dates on the calendar on the next page.

**THE SCHOOL YEAR**

The school year starts: \_\_\_\_\_

The school year ends: \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL VACATIONS**

Winter vacation starts: \_\_\_\_\_

Winter vacation ends: \_\_\_\_\_

Spring vacation starts: \_\_\_\_\_

Spring vacation ends: \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**

Name of Holiday	Date	Day of Week

Other days the school is closed:

## PAIR ACTIVITY 2 continued

2002

## AUGUST

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## SEPTEMBER

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## NOVEMBER

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2003

## JANUARY

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## PAIR ACTIVITY 2 continued

2003

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2004

## JANUARY

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## FEBRUARY

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## PAIR ACTIVITY 2 continued

2004

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2005

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## PAIR ACTIVITY 2 continued

2005

## AUGUST

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## DECEMBER

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2006

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## FEBRUARY

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## APRIL

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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

**WRITING ACTIVITY: Note to the Teacher**

*Directions:* Mrs. García's son has a dental appointment today at 2:00 P.M. She writes a note to his teacher, Mr. Gordon. Her son will give this note to his teacher this morning. Read the note.

December 20, 2004
<p>Dear Mr. Gordon,</p> <p>José has a dental appointment today. I will pick him up at 1:30.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thank you,</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Mrs. García</i></p>

Now write a note to your child's teacher.  
Your child has a doctor's appointment tomorrow at 2:00.

<p>Dear _____ ,</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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**CULTURAL COMPARISON ACTIVITY 1: Organization of Schools in Native Country****ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS IN \_\_\_\_\_**  
(native country)

*Directions:* How are schools organized in your native country? Draw the school system of your native country here. (Note: Students can work in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class. Use “Pictures for Vocabulary Development” on page 148 or 149 as a model.)

Then talk about how the organization of schools in your native country is different from the organization of schools in your local school district in the United States.

## CULTURAL COMPARISON ACTIVITY 2: Schools and Education

*Directions:* Think about schools in your native country and in the United States. Discuss the answers to the questions below with your classmates. (Optional: Write the information in the chart.)

	IN _____ (native country)	IN THE U.S.
1. Do all children go to school? Is it important for children to attend school everyday?		
2. Is school free? Do families have to pay for their children to go to school? Where does the money for schools come from?		
3. At what age do children usually begin school? For how many years do children usually go to school?		
4. How are schools organized? Do children of different ages study in different school buildings?		
5. Are parents involved in their children's education? How?		
6. Are universities free? Do many children get a university education?		
7. Who makes decisions about the schools?		

## EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

As a class, identify an important issue that affects the group. Some ideas are:

- School board elections
- School funding
- School bilingual/ESL programs
- Special education
- Post-secondary options
- Graduation requirements
- Visiting your child's school
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Registering your child for school
- Volunteering in your child's school
- Communicating with your child's teacher
- Attending a school event
- School services (vision/hearing screening, social services, tutoring, etc.)

Determine the best course of action from the suggestions below or have students generate their own plan of action. Choose an activity requiring a response by a school official or representative. Also select an activity in which students have a vested interest so that they will follow through to a satisfactory conclusion. Some possible activities are:

1. Have students work in small groups and use a community map or telephone directory to locate the public schools in their community. They should find out the ages/grades for each school (by calling the school, if necessary).  
*risk: low – medium*  
*language level: high beginning – intermediate*
2. If students have children in a local elementary or middle school, have them bring the weekly “take home” newsletter to class. Have them share one piece of school news with the other students.  
*risk: low*  
*language level: all*
3. Have students telephone the local schools to find out the date, time, and location of the next school board meetings. Have them report this information to the class.  
*risk: high*  
*language level: high beginning – advanced*
4. As a class, attend a school board meeting. Ask for a copy of the agenda beforehand, if possible. Afterwards, have students discuss the current community school issues.  
*risk: low*  
*language level: intermediate – advanced*
5. Have students access the web site of a local school they want to learn more about. Ask individual students to report on information they learn.  
*risk: low*  
*language level: high beginning – advanced*

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**EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES** continued

6. Have students call the local elementary or middle school to find out the ways in which parent volunteers can help in the school.  
*risk: high*  
*language level: intermediate – advanced*
7. Have students volunteer to help in a local school. Service can be for one event or an ongoing basis. (For example, students may be able to do a presentation on their native country or culture.)  
*risk: high*  
*language level: intermediate – advanced*
8. Invite a school board member, school administrator, counselor, or social worker as a guest speaker. Have students prepare questions in advance. You might have the speaker focus on a specific issue, such as bilingual/ESL services in the school.  
*risk: medium – high*  
*language level: high beginning – advanced*
9. As a class, attend a school event – concert, art exhibit, play, sports event, etc. After the event, students can discuss or write about their impressions.  
*risk: low*  
*language level: all*
10. In class, have students scan the community newspaper for news about your local schools. Students can then summarize school-related stories orally or in writing and share them with the class.  
*risk: medium*  
*language level: intermediate – advanced*
11. Have students find out the date and the name of the candidates for the next school board election. They can then check the community newspaper for information about the candidates.  
*risk: low*  
*language level: high beginning – advanced*